

La Crosse FRO, April 2004



U.S. Fish And Wildlife Service

Children Outreach

"Students Held Captive by River Fauna"

05/11/2004

During the course of one day, over 120 Galesville Elementary School students learned more about the life history, ecology, cultural significance, and economic importance of native freshwater mussels (America's Hidden Treasure) than they had ever imagined. Many of these students were also more than happy to personally immerse themselves in this subject (as well as the surrounding water) while collecting and scrutinizing a variety of live specimens brought in for close examination. On the following day, the creative imaginations of 60 La Crosse elementary students, deemed "Champions of Learning", were captured by several small vials containing live water fleas and walleye larvae that were passed among the group during a brief discussion on aquatic food webs. This was followed by two action-packed videos featuring native paddlefish and exotic Asian carp, which led to concluding discussions of how these species compete with one another for food resources and other negative impacts of aquatic nuisance species. As a result of these educational "River Celebrations", more than 180 school children and their teachers will have a greater appreciation for the wide variety of life teeming below the surface of area rivers that they may visit during the summer while enjoying a well deserved vacation.

The wandering minds of elementary school students suffering from spring fever were briefly held captive by a diverse variety of aquatic fauna that were exhibited by La Crosse FRO fishery biologist Mark Steingraeber at "River Days" celebrations held recently in Galesville and La Crosse, Wisconsin. During the course of one day, over 120 Galesville students learned more about the life history, ecology, cultural significance, and economic importance of native freshwater mussels (America's Hidden Treasure) than they had ever imagined. Many of these students were also more than happy to personally immerse themselves in this subject (as well as the surrounding water) while collecting and scrutinizing a variety of live specimens brought in for close examination. On the following day, the creative imaginations of 60 La Crosse students, deemed "Champions of Learning", were captured by several small vials containing live water fleas and walleye larvae that were passed among the group during a brief discussion on aquatic food webs. This was followed by two action-packed videos featuring native paddlefish and exotic Asian carp, which led to concluding discussions of how these species compete with one another for food resources and other negative impacts of aquatic nuisance species. As a result of these educational "celebrations", more than 180 school children and their teachers will have a greater appreciation for the wide variety of life teeming below the surface of area rivers that they may visit during the summer while enjoying a well deserved vacation.

Mark Steingraeber